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Businesses and Governor Press for Uber-Style Ride Apps in USVI, Urge Legislature to Act

At a Christiansted Restaurant & Retail Assoc. forum at Gov't House, business owners cited after-hours taxi gaps for residents and visitors and urged app-based rides, while Gov. Bryan pressed stakeholders to “demand that we have Uber” and lobby senators.

Business / **Published On November 01, 2025 07:36 AM /**

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Calls to legalize app-based ride services dominated a forum on Thursday hosted by the Christiansted Restaurant & Retail Association, where business owners described chronic gaps in taxi availability and Governor Albert Bryan Jr. urged attendees to organize and press senators to authorize an Uber-style option for the territory.

A local business representative said Christiansted's curbside space has long been constrained by concentrated taxi staging, and suggested spreading stands across Company Street, Sunday Market Square, known as Times Square, and the government parking lot rather than clustering on King Street. The speaker added that the territory is "going to have to open up to Uber and these types of apps," arguing the services are essential for travelers and locals alike who "cannot get a taxi, especially after" peak hours. The speaker said allowing ride-hail options "can really open up a lot of opportunity for people," citing easier commutes to jobs and daycare and flexible earning for part-time drivers.

In response, Governor Bryan said that advocacy efforts must be directed squarely at the Legislature, since the executive branch lacks the authority to act unilaterally. He told attendees that CRRA, the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, and business leaders should "sit down and demand that we have Uber," emphasizing that legislative approval is required to authorize ride-hailing services. "We can't implement otherwise," Bryan said, noting that the measure would have been enacted by executive order long ago if that power existed. He added that when positive proposals surface, "nobody shows up," leaving lawmakers politically exposed. "We have to provide cover for our people in the Legislature," the governor said. "We support this."

The governor emphasized two ongoing challenges: visitors struggling to secure transportation after dark and taxi fares that remain unreasonably high for short, routine trips. He urged private sector leaders to publicly advocate for the introduction of ride-hailing in the Virgin Islands, suggesting that their support would help lawmakers feel politically secure in advancing enabling legislation. Bryan also mentioned the possibility of limiting ride-hailing to small passenger vehicles, excluding larger car services, and said he was prepared to absorb criticism if the business community would stand behind the initiative and provide political backing to get it passed.

The exchange framed a broader access problem: business owners said locals struggle to reach work or childcare when no taxi is available "after" hours or off the main routes. The governor, in turn, tied any solution to sustained, visible business-community advocacy at the Legislature.

As the conversation pivoted, Mr. Bryan reiterated that public backing is decisive. "We need your support to get [it] done," he said, pressing attendees to mobilize so senators can advance a bill enabling app-based rides while preserving defined roles for traditional taxis.